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OUR ALLIES, THE RUSSIAN PEOPLE

by Eugene Lyons

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> "It is, of course, the right of the Russian people to have such form of government as they may choose. We, the democrats, will be the first to defend that right. When confined within their borders, their totalitarian regime is their concern, not ours."

These words are taken from a recent address by Justice William O. Douglas, which received the dual accolade of publication in the Progressive and the Reader's Digest. To the Digest the address seemed an all-American document and to the Progressive an all-liberal document.

While the speech as a whole was sound and inspiring, this particular passage, it seems to me, reflects the present confused estate of both liberalism and Americanism. As a formulation of the American attitude in the critical area of Soviet-American relations it is narrow, callous, illiberal and, worst of all, calculated to rally the long-suffering Russian people around a regime they hate.

Mr. Douglas' statement makes the amazing assumption that a totalitarian setup represents the free choice of its subjects, and in particular that the Russian people have "chosen" their current form of government. Secondly, and more important, in the name of "democracy" it enters a cold-blooded disclaimer of "concern" for oppression and horror in another country.

On technical sovereignty grounds, an honest liberal washes his hands of the Russian masses and their aspirations. In the unequal struggle between the Russian people and their police-State, where the awareness of sympathy and support among free peoples beyond their borders is so vital to the morale of the opposition, he finds it possible to proclaim a know-nothing neutrality!

This would be understandable if Justice Douglas were speaking officially, as an authorized spokesman of the American Government bound by the rules of diplomatic usage. Common sense and common necessity support the Jeffersonian dictum that we should recognize and deal with any de facto government; the 16-year refusal to acknowledge the existence of the Soviet regime was rather silly.

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But Justice Douglas spoke in his private capacity as a progressive leader. Before 1917, liberals as a matter of course expressed deep concern for the sufferings of the Russian population under Czarist autocracy. At times even our Government protested vigorously against specific episodes of Czarist injustice. Revolutionary tendencies in Russia drew strength and confidence from the understanding attitude of foreign democrats. Why should liberals today feel themselves under constraint to deny concern for injustices in the U. S. S. R? How can a liberal suggest that there is no hope for the liberation of the Russian people?

This neutrality towards brutality is especially strange so soon after we have given so much blood, treasure and emotion to the destruction of Hitlerism. Suppose an outstanding American liberal, ten years ago, had insisted that what the Nazis did in their own German household -- to their own Jews and democrats, for instance -- was no concern of ours; that we, as democrats, would be the first to defend their sovereign right to perpetrate horror within their frontiers. Would self-righteous progressives have applauded him with such unthinking alacrity? Of course not. They would have denounced this attitude as morally callous. They would have argued that totalitarian evils, even if confined to one nation, are the inescapable concern of all free men.

The sad fact, of thirty years' duration, is that the Russian people have been consistently denied the moral backing and humane sympathy of the non-Soviet world. So-called liberal opinion has been sensitive to the fate of democracy in China or Argentina -- but not in Soviet Russia. Slavery in Ethiopia and political persecutions in Spain have been the objects of liberal-democratic protests and solicitude -- but not forced labor and millionfold political prisoners in the sacred Soviet area.

The Russian people have in effect been excluded from the human race, written off as expendables in a Great Experiment. This degenerate attitude persists even among high-minded men who know that the experiment failed long ago. Somehow normal moral reflexes, in the face of terror and injustice, cease to function at the Soviet borders.

Opponents of the Soviet tyranny have none of the solace and encouragement from free men and women upon which Russians fighting Czarism could count in the past. The kind of people who used to side with the Russian masses against their oppressors now line up with the police-State against its victims. They join or condone organizations of self-styled "friends of the Soviet Union" who are in fact merely friends of the Soviet dictatorship.

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Today anyone who champions the Russian people against their totalitarian masters is likely to be discounted as "anti-Russian" and pilloried as a reactionary or worse. There we have the measure of the triumph of the Kremlin propaganda lies, the most shameless of which has it that the Bolshevik party-government and the Russian people are identical.

Suppose principled enemies of the Soviet regime within Russia -- and that, I am convinced, means the great majority of the Russian people -- could read Justice Douglas' statement. They would be insulted and disheartened: insulted by the implication that they have "chosen" their hateful bondage; disheartened by the explicit warning that they can expect neither fellow-feeling nor help from honest liberals in any showdown with the regime.

III

Beyond the Soviet frontiers there are today at least half a million Russian fugitives from Stalinism -- workers, peasants, intellectuals, former officials, repentant Communists. They call themselves "non-returners". Having been washed into Central and Western Europe by the tides of war events, they deliberately chose freedom at the price of separation from their homes and relatives, economic destitution, political outlawry, relentless persecution by a vindictive government.

In making their choice they had counted heavily on the fellowship of democratic peoples, especially of those who call themselves liberals and progressives. Instead they found the kind of indifference and neutrality summed up by Mr. Douglas. Seen through their eyes, the quoted statement must appear truly tragic.

And, after all, our official conduct has been in line with that summation. Literally millions of would-be "non-returners" were driven back into the totalitarian stockades by American, British and French bayonets in compliance with a stupid and cruel commitment to Stalin at Yalta. Those who succeeded in remaining abroad have been denied traditional political asylum and even full status as Displaced Persons; many of them pose as Balts, Poles, Czechs, Serbs, for fear of being handed over to Soviet vengeance. Thousands of deserters from the Red armies of occupation, having sought sanctuary in the democratic zones of Germany and Austria, were delivered by us to Soviet firing squads.

All of which is morally degrading, a betrayal of democratic allies to placate their totalitarian persecutors. But it is also politically shortsighted to the point of idiocy. In the unfolding struggle between the Kremlin and the non-Soviet world, common sense dictates that we deepen and widen the gulf between Stalin's dictatorship and its subjects. We need only visualize a Russia liberated from its Bolshevik

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yoke to realize that we have no quarrel with Russia or Russians, but only with the Communist regime and its world-wide purposes. Yet we tend, by assuming a mythical unity of government and people, to justify the Kremlin's eager claims that we want to destroy "the Russian people".

Fortunately the dramatic case of Mrs. Kasenkina has helped to place the underlying issue in a clear light. It is impossible to misunderstand or misinterpret the terror which enfolded this particular Russian woman. Her leap to liberty, from an upper story of the Soviet Consulate in New York, finally erased from most American minds the tragic illusion that the Communist tyranny is representative of Russia.

IV

War with the Communist dictatorship is by no means inevitable. But only those with a genius for self-deception can ignore the possibility. If the cold war should burst into hot conflict, popular disaffection inside the U. S. S. R. may be worth more than atom bombs in hastening our victory. Alliance with the Russian people against their rulers is the one hope of short-cutting the struggle and saving millions of lives.

The time to begin building that alliance is now. Had the German invaders lived up to the desperate hope inside Russia that they were coming as liberators, not as conquerors and despoilers, the whole course of recent history might have been different. The totalitarian nature of Hitler's Germany, and its racial obsessions, foredoomed that hope. The representative governments, on the contrary, can and should win the support of the Russian people.

We must be clear in our own minds that the Kremlin and its terrorized subjects are distinct entities. We must find ways and means to convey our sense of this dualism to the beleaguered Russians. Every time we fail to differentiate clearly between the dictatorship and its victims we are playing into Stalin's hands. We are helping him to sell his offensive against the free world as a defense of Russia.

The nature of the Soviet regime, the discontents and the yearnings for a freer life inside Russia, the hungers for Western friendship and ideas now being purged by the police-State -- these are very much our concern. Both as a matter of morals and as a matter of policy we must begin to intervene boldly and without ambiguity on the side of the Russian people.

Eugene Lyons, a roving editor of the Reader's Digest, served for six years as United Press correspondent in Russia and is the author of Assignment in Utopia, The Red Decade and other books on Communism.

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Not Merely Gossip *A Supplement to* Human Events August 25, 1948

UNIV. OF MINN. AUG 31 1948

By Frank C. Hanighen

The most interesting aspect of the increasingly important movement, popularly dubbed "Dixiecrat", is the fact that the leaders repudiate this name and insist that "States' Rights Democratic Party" is their official and authentic title. It expresses their basic political philosophy, according to a spokesman whom we interviewed in the Party's newly opened Washington office. The followers of Governors Thurmond and Wright came together because "Mr. Truman's party" deserted the States' Rights principle -- the cornerstone of its platform for over a century. The racial issue, it is said, is merely local. It can and will be handled by state authorities, like many other purely local problems.

Furthermore, the States' Rights people insist that their organization is a national, not a Southern party. They will fight for "home rule" on various issues, peculiar to states and regions all over the country. As an earnest of their intention to confirm this promise, they have crossed the Mason and Dixon line. States' Rights organizers have failed to get on the ballot in Missouri; nevertheless they hope to succeed in Minnesota, Colorado, Maryland and Oklahoma. Lack of time may and probably will prevent electoral recognition in most of the Northern states, but the one major objective is to create organizations in all states of the Union. This long-range strategy sounds rather ambitious for a Party so recently born. However, the reasoning of their spokesmen commands serious attention.

Publicly, the States' Rights leaders talk about winning enough electoral votes to throw the election of the President into the House of Representatives, where they would hold a veto over the choice of Chief Executive and Vice-President. Off the record, they concede that Dewey will be elected by a comfortable majority at the polls. On this assumption, they have outlined privately the following strategy. They expect to obtain more electoral votes than Truman. (In view of the way the tide is running, this supposition is by no means fantastic.) Then, with this bloc of votes, their representatives in Congress will demand recognition as the Minority Party, with all the rights and privileges thereto. The GOP Congressional leaders, in order to carry on business successfully, will have to accede. From this base, the States' Rights Party can then proceed to capture the Democratic Party organization in Northern states, and to re-establish that Party on the political foundations which Truman has undermined.

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A friend remarked the other day, anent the spy probe, "Why, it's a Dreyfus case in reverse". He meant that in this affaire, the "liberals" are all on the wrong side. With all the energy of Zola circa 1903, they are busily trying to hush up matters, instead of striving to expose them. They leave the "J'Accuse" role to others. Even if the "liberals" were sincere in their present claim that they view the affair as impartial civil libertarians, they are, to say the least, rather partial in their sympathies. They are generous with tears for those exposed and stress the damage which the reputations of these men may suffer as a result of the investigation. Yet, they are silent about the liabilities which the "exposers" have incurred.

For instance, no journalistic knight-errant has made the point that Mr. Whittaker Chambers is hazarding a great deal in assuming his present role and has nothing material to gain by so doing. We do not know Chambers. However, we understand from reliable sources that he is suffering from a dangerous heart affliction -- which the Hearings can scarcely help -- and feels that he has not many years to live. He is

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even in his present orthodoxy. His energy will, as many politicians hope, win back to the government parties many of the votes which would, they feared, go in October to de Gaulle. The voter will, they calculate, say: "Why, we've already got a strong man."

It is a sign of the times that now the political battle in France centers entirely round the moderate vote. A mere thirty months ago, when the Communist Party was the strongest in the country and had its men in the Government, France seemed all set for Czechoslovakia's fate. First, the Communists were ejected from the Government. Now, even the Socialists, discredited as they are, try to save themselves at the next election behind the sworn opponent of their doctrines. The credit, brought by Reynaud to the Government of which they form a part, will, they hope, pull them through. Yet, even while the Socialists want him to save the situation and themselves, they try nonetheless to tone down his policies. They impede his movements, even as they cling to him, as a drowning man pulls down his rescuer. For this reason he would be an optimist indeed who would predict Reynaud's ability to get his way.

The debate on special powers in the French Parliament should interest especially the American student of politics, for it brings into sharp contrast our Parliament and his Congress. In France, Parliament is the spendthrift. For this reason, and in order that economy may be realized, its powers must be curtailed and the Administration's freedom of action enlarged. To an American of 1948, this may seem odd.

The problem Reynaud must solve can be stated simply. The national product of France is below its 1938 level and much below its 1929 level. Meanwhile public expenditure has continuously increased, thanks both to Socialist doctrines and lax administration. At the present time, in compliance with M. Mounet's views on re-equipment, the tempo of capital investment has also been greatly accelerated. The result is that much smaller quantities of goods and services are available for consumption. The people are unwilling either to pay taxes, or to set aside as savings such fraction of their incomes as is commensurate with that of the national product taken by the State and capital investment. Therefore, there is never enough money in the Treasury to meet State expenditure and capital investment: this means inflation. And there is always too much in the consumer's pocket: this means higher and higher prices.

The reforms required will prove highly unpopular, and will probably need a far more determined Government than that of Premier Marie, few of whose Ministry, other than M. Schumann and M. Rene Meyer, have a real understanding of M. Reynaud's complicated problem.

* * *

Some of the subtler European intelligences are giving currency to a reassuring thought: their reasoning, if not always clearly understood, leads to a conclusion which is adopted with enthusiasm. Russian imperialism, they say, will now move East, not West. Why? Because the institutions evolved in Russia are naturally applicable only in backward countries. The Stalinians would, therefore, only make trouble for themselves were they to absorb Western Europe with profitable absorption of so many backward Middle East and Asiatic countries still open to them.

This reasoning is based entirely on the contrast between Marxism and Stalinism. Where as Marx expected his proletarian revolution to happen in advanced industrial countries, the revolution, when it happened, happened in Russia. Marx supposed that, before the revolution's happening, capitalism would have achieved fully the industrial equipment of the country concerned. Thus the workers' republic would need to make practically no capital investment. In other words, Marx, like all Socialist thinkers since Plato, pictured the good Society as stationary.

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Now Leninism-Stalinism, as its adepts cumbrously call it, on finding itself the "Fuehrer" of an undeveloped empire, made rapid industrialization its first objective. This meant, of course, a high rate of capital investment -- of, in Marxist jargon, a high degree of workers' exploitation. No other national economy takes a higher proportion of the national product for State and investment purposes than does the Stalinist -- or leaves less for the consumer. And it is clear that requisitioning for investment purposes and the resultant inroad on consumption scale can be effected, on this scale, only by a police State, and will be accepted only by a submissive people which is anyhow used to a low standard of life.

In the democracies of Western Europe the rates of State expenditure and capital investment are higher than in the past but are still much lower than the Russian. Even so they now encounter popular resistance based on what may be termed a daily plebiscite taken by consumers, who strive, unavailingly but significantly, to expend on consumer goods purchasing power which, on the Government's plans, should find its way into the Treasury and capital investment. Consumers so nurtured would certainly take hardly to the Russian economic system, for it is an aggravation of the very thing they are already resisting.

But, it may be said, would not the Communists, if they really wanted to control these Western countries, elaborate some system which had in it more of Marx and less of Stalin, and would, by drawing less of its inspiration from the Russian model, be better suited to the West? It has not so happened. The recent Russian plan for Austria is illuminating in this, that it is a slavish imitation of the Russian original -- and so it has been elsewhere.

It may be said that their failure to make suitable plans for the Western countries is proof that the Russians do not mean business there. This argument is, unfortunately, a weak one; for it is a feature of tyrannies that, capable as they are of perfecting one technique, they cannot, at the bidding of circumstances, switch to new ones.

* * *

Mr. Paul Hoffman made an excellent impression over here, and we may suppose that the European experts made a good impression on him. Certainly they have worked very hard, and they belong, most of them, to that wholly admirable breed of men, the European professional Civil Servant.

Yet the uneasy feeling remains that the whole program tends more and more to resemble the dispatch of convoys to a beleaguered town -- a town, moreover, which is divided into seventeen separate areas each enduring its private siege, so that exchanges between them become ever more difficult. As these sieges result merely from their own internal policies -- especially those relating to the prices of goods and currencies -- would it not, perhaps, be better to raise them altogether rather than undergo the mathematical feats of arms involved in calculating how much of each separate commodity will reach the town from the outer world, and how much will be traded between the various areas?

The maze of economic complications in Europe must baffle, in the end, even the most expert minds. It is a fact today that bilateral agreements between individual countries are not being honored. What officials have agreed sometimes miscarries on what buyers do. So it has happened with the agreement between France and Italy. The buyers of one have bought their full allowance -- not so the buyers of the other -- with the result that the whole of the artistically devised system of compensating francs with lire has broken down. In the end, it will prove necessary for dollars to be made available to European countries for buying not only in the U. S. A. but also in other European countries with which they are running a deficit.

The deepening complexity makes it almost certain that the whole problem will one day have to be dealt with on a different basis.

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Book Events

Road to Survival, by William Vogt. New York: William Sloane Associates, Inc. $4.00. Reviewed by George R. Leighton.

"By excessive breeding and abuse of the land mankind has backed itself into an ecological trap." That is to say, population in the United States and throughout the world has expanded so enormously in the past century and the exploitation of the world's natural resources has been so ruthless, that the era of starvation for many and a lower standard of living for all is now at hand. What Malthus deduced in his Essay on Population in 1798, Mr. Vogt seeks to demonstrate from the facts a hundred and fifty years later. Mr. Vogt is an American ornithologist who, by easy stages, has moved his professional life from an exclusive concern with birds to an ecological concern with the globe. Now chief of the conservation section of the Pan American Union, he has been employed as an expert in many parts of the world, including a term as consultant to the Peruvian Compania Administradora del Guano.

The author's thesis, of course, is an old one; its plausibility and its horrors are supported by developments of the past twenty-five years. His book is startling simply because what many observant people predicted long ago is now, and most melodramatically, coming true. The standard of living of the Republic of El Salvador, for example, is appreciably lower than it was a decade ago because of the soil gutting and forest ruination. It will be much worse ten years hence. The same thing is true of Haiti; American relief in Greece only puts a poultice on a cancer; the natural resources of Chile are almost bled to death; arable land in Mexico is vanishing. Starvation, of the sort familiar in China and India, is now occurring in many other places. Bumper crops in the United States are maintained only by merciless soil exploitation. In sum, the natural equilibrium, the balanced relation of man to his environment, has been overturned. Though nature, in the end, will redress this balance, the operation will be rigorous in a way to freeze the humanitarian's blood. Two things only will forestall this cataclysm: conservation (with agriculture and forestry put on a sustained yield basis) and birth control on a world scale.

How are Mr. Vogt's proposed reforms to be achieved? The author admits the difficulty. Free enterprise has all but wrecked America, he claims, and though Congressmen are mostly hard-working and honest, "they are unaware of man's impact on his environment and its impact on him". (He quotes one of his authorities as saying that the population of the U. S. should be no more than 100 million.) Russia, on the other hand, though it has superb soil scientists, is beset with "the clumsiness of a bureaucracy largely headed by scientific ignoramuses and shot through with terror and politics". As for Socialist Britain, that Government is counting on economic and political "prestidigitation" and "unless we are willing to place fifty million British feet beneath our dining table we may well see famine once more stalking the streets of London". Here and there is a wan shred of hope; patches of Europe are well handled in respect to soil and water; so is Palestine; our own Conservation Service is admirable though inadequate. "An international WPA is to be preferred to an atomic or bacterial war against which there is no defense", but the author concedes at once that relief for Europe can only accelerate the already headlong birth rate and make another war certain. Sometimes the author thinks that a conservation-birth control crusade would give the United Nations a "unifying principle" which they now lack; at others he seems to fall back on the assurance that "total environment" has laws that cannot be defied and that starvation will do eventually what man won't.

Mr. Leighton, formerly Assistant Editor of Harper's Magazine, is now free-lancing.

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